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### PATENT ABSTRACTS OF JAPAN

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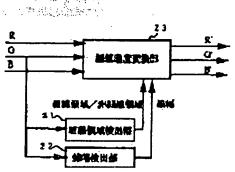
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#### (54) IMAGE PROCESSOR

#### (57)Abstract:

PROBLEM TO BE SOLVED: To provide an image processor in which reading accuracy of an image is improved through the elimination of a redundant component included in a reflected light of an original by providing a means to correct a read error caused in a thin line area in a white background mainly due to scattering of a light irradiating the original.

SOLUTION: This processor is provided with a read error correction section consisting of a thin line area detection section 21, a line width detection section 22 and athin line density conversion section 23, and the correction section converts image signals R, G, B subjected to shading correction and logarithmic correction into R', G', B' and output them to a next stage. The thin line area selection section 21 and the line width detection section 22 detect the image signal G as to whether or not the signal is in existence in a thin line area



or detect the line width. The thin line density conversion section 23 decides the correction amount depending on the density and the line width of the thin line area in the case of the thin line area based on the detection result and corrects and output the image signals R, G, B. When not in the thin line area, the section 23 outputs the image signals R, G, B as they are. Thus, the image processor is obtained, in which image read accuracy is improved.

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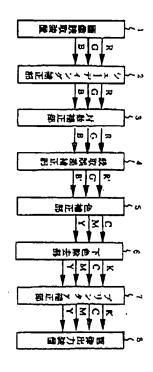
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#### (54) 【発明の名称】 固備処理装置

#### (57)【要約】

【課題】 原稿の反射光に含まれる冗長な成分を除去して画像の読み取り精度を向上させる。

【解決手段】 カラー画像処理装置に読み取り誤烹補正部4を設ける。読み取り誤荛補正部4は、原稿中の白地上の細線領域を検出し、細線領域における濃度低下を補正する。



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#### 【特許請求の範囲】

【請求項1】 原稿を光学的に走査して読取るために、 該原稿に光を照射する光源と、該原稿の反射光を結像さ せるための光学系と、該光学系を経た光が入外し田気信 号に変換する光電変換器からなる画像読み取り装置を踊 えた画像処理装置において、前記原稿に照射された光が 散乱することによって生じる読み取り誤差を補正する手 段を備えたことを特徴とする画像処理装置。

【請求項2】 前記誤差補正手段は、画像信号中から細 稼領域を検出する手段と、線幅を検出する手段と、該脚 10 線領域および線幅を基に組線虚度を補正する手段を備え たことを特徴とする請求項1記載の画像処理装置。

【請求項3】 前記翻線領域検川手段は、正管中の画素 近傍の縦、揺、もしくは斜め方向の画素領域において走 査中の該画業の濃度が最大濃度となる画素を細線領域と して検出することを特徴とする請求項2記載の画像処理 装置。

【請求項4】 前記細線過度補正手段は、前記細線領域 として検出された衝素の遺度値を検出し、該検出した濃 度値に応じて濃度補正量を制御することを特徴とする詩 20 置で得られる阿像情報は、図11に示す反射光と図12 求項2記載の画像処理装置。

【請求項5】 前記細線遺度補正手段は、前記線幅に応 じて適度補正量を制御することを特徴とする請求項2記 載の画像処理装置。

【請求項6】 前記画像がカラー入力画像であるとき、 前記細線濃度補正手段は色相を一定に保ちながら濃度の のを補正することを特徴とする請求項2記載の画像処理 装置。

【請求項7】 前記画像が対数補正処理後の濃度空間で あるRGB信号、またはCMY信号のカラー入力画像で あるとき、前記細線濃度補正手段は該R.G.Bまたは C. M. Yの各画素値に所定量を加減算することにより 濃度を補正することを特徴とする請求項2記載の画像処 迎装借。

#### 【発明の詳細な説明】

[0001]

【発明の属する技術分野】本発明は、文字、細線などを 含む原稿の画像読み取り精度を向上させた画像処理装置 に関する。

[0002]

【従来の技術】従来のデジタルカラー復写機で用いられ ている画像読取装置の例を説明する。図9は、複写機の 金体図であり、読み取り対象の原稿をコンタクトガラス 面と接するように置き、圧板を閉じてガラス面との間に 原稿を挟み込んだ後、読取り動作を行う。

【0003】画像読取装置には、コンタクトガラス面の 下血に沿って往復運動することにより原稿を光学的に走 流して読取る走査器が設けられている。図10は、走査 器の概要を示し、原稿を照明する照明ランプ、原稿から の反射光を受光する光電変換器、原稿からの反射光を光 50 【0009】しかし、上記したエッジ強調処理は画像中

電変換器に導くレンズなどの光学系素子によって構成さ

【0004】読み取り動作は、光源から原稿に光を照射 しながら走査し、原稿の反射光を光学系を経て光電変換 器に入光し、電気信号に光電変換することにより行われ る。光電変換器は、原稿からの反射光を光電変換するこ とにより、画像情報をRGBの光の色信号として出力す るもので、例えばCCDラインイメージセンサなどを主 体に堪成される。

【0005】次に、各読み取り画案の周辺に照射された 光が設乱することにより、読み取り誤差の発生する過程 について説明する。原稿の反射光は理想的には図11に 示すように、原稿表面で反射した反射光から成ると考え ることができる。しかしながら、実際には図12に示す ように原稿表面での反射光以外に原稿内部へ侵入し、不 特定の方向に散乱した後に原稿外へ放出される冗長な反 射光がある。

[0006]

【発明が解決しようとする課題】このため、画像読取装 に示す冗長な反射光とが合成されたものとなり、例え ば、白地上に細線がある原稿を読み取った場合には冗長 な反射光の影響を大きく受けて、細線の読取遺皮が低下 するという現象が生じる。読み取り温度の低下の度合は 級画の濃度が低いほど、また線幅が狭いほど周辺で散乱 した光の影響を大きく受ける。

【0007】このような読み取り誤差は、例えば、複写 機等で読み取り画像を再生した場合に、特に鉛筆書きな どの低コントラスト文字の濃度が低下し、再現性が悪く なるという問題が生じる。

【0008】一般の核写機では文字の再現性を向上する 処理として、例えば、エッジ強調処理などが適用されて いる。エッジ強調処理の従来例としては、濃度で表現さ れたカラー画像信号から明度情報を抽出し、その明度情 報からエッジ強調の程度を示す信号を生成し、該信号と 画像信号の濃度レベルとに応じた結果を出力するエッジ 強調装置(特開昭61-273073号公報を参照)、 RCBのカラー画像信号をL\*a\*b\*信号に変換し、 し\*にのみ鲜鋭度補正(エッジ強調)を行い、その後、 40 RGB信号に逆変換、もしくはCMY信号に変換を行う 装置(特開平3 102578号公報、特開平4-17 0267号公報を参照)、カラー画像信号の少なくとも 一色の画像データからラプラシアンを算出し、そのラブ ラシアンと画像信号とを加算するエッジ強調装置(特別 昭62-149264号公報を参照)、カラー画像信号 の少なくとも一色の画像データからフィルタ信号を発出 し、そのフィルタ信号に基づいて画像信号を補正するエ ッジ強調装置(特開平4-14383号公報を参照)な どが提案されている。

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のエッジ部の鈍りを改善することを目的としたものであ り、前述したような濃度が低下して生じる画質劣化に対 しては効果が少なく、依然として文字がかすれるという 問題がある。

【0010】本発明の目的は、各読取り画素の周辺に照 射された光が散乱することにより生じる、低コントラス ト文字の温度低下による両質劣化を改善する画像処理装 置を提供することことにある。

#### [0011]

【課題を解決するための手段】前記目的を達成するため に、諸求項1記載の発明では、原稿を光学的に走査して 読取るために、該原稿に光を照射する光源と、該原稿の 反射光を結像させるための光学系と、該光学系を経た光 が入射し電気信号に変換する光電変換器からなる画像説 み取り装置を備えた画像処理装置において、前記原稿に 照射された光が散乱することによって生じる読み取り誤 **党を補正する手段を備えたことを特徴としている。** 

【0012】 請求項2記載の発明では、前記調差補正手 段は、画像信号中から細線領域を検出する手段と、線幅 を検出する手段と、該細線領域および線幅を基に細線濃 20 度を補正する手段を備えたことを特徴としている。

【0013】請求項3記載の発明では、前記細線領域検 出手段は、走査中の画素近傍の縦、横、もしくは斜め方 向の画素領域において走査中の該画素の濃度が最大濃度 となる面素を細線領域として検出することを特徴として

【0014】請求項1記載の発明では、前記細線濃度補 正手段は、前記細線領域として検出された画案の濃度値 を検出し、該検出した濃度値に応じて濃度補正量を制御 することを特徴としている。

【0015】胡求項5記載の発明では、前記細線濃度補 正手段は、前記線幅に応じて濃度補正量を制御すること を特徴としている。

【0016】 請求項6記載の発明では、前記画像がカラ 一入力画像であるとき、前記細線濃度補正手段は色相を 一定に保ちながら濃度のみを補正することを特徴として

【0017】 請求項7記載の発明では、前記画像が対数 補正処理後の濃度空間であるRGB信号、またはCMY 信号のカラー入力画像であるとき、前記細線護度補正手 段は該R、G、BまたはC、M、Yの各画素値に所定量 を加減算することにより濃度を補正することを特徴とし ている。

#### [0018]

【発明の実施の形態】以下、本発明の一実施例を図面を 用いて具体的に説明する。カラー被写機を例に、本発明 の実施例に係る画像処理装置を説明する。図1は、本発 明のカラー画像処理装置の機能プロック図を示す。画像 **読取装置 1 には、コンタクトガラス面の下面に沿って往** 復運動することにより原稿を光学的に走査して読取る走 50 る。図4に示すD2方向ピーク画素検出回路213は、

査器がある。走査器は光源から原稿に光を照射しながら 走査し、その反射光を光電変換し両像情報を出力する。 カラー画像の光電変換は、例えば原稿の反射光をR C B の3色に分解するフィルタにより色分解し、CCD等の 受光素子を用い、その光量に比例したアナログ信号を得 た後、AD変換器を用いてRGBデジタル信号の画像情 報を得る。

【0019】光霞変換により得られた画像信号は、一般 には受光素子が画素母にばらつきがあることや、原稿を 照射する光源の光量が中央付近と端部で異なるために、 シェーディング補正部2でシェーディング補正処理を行 い、センサ出力で生じるばらつきが均一になるように補 正する。

【0020】原稿濃度と原稿の反射光量は対数関係にあ る。対数補正部3で対数補正処理を行うことにより、シ ェーディング補正処理後の画像信号を原稿濃度に比例す る信号に変換する。ここでは信号値は0~255の値を 取り、0が白に対応し、255が黒に対応するものとす

【0021】次に、本発明の特徴である読取誤差補正部 4における処理について詳細に説明する。 読取り誤差 は、主に白地上の細線領域において発生することに着目 し、本実施例では原稿中の白地上の細線領域を検出し、 検出された細線領域部での濃度低下を適切な値に補正す

【0022】図2は、読取り誤差補正部の構成を示し、 細線領域検出部21と線幅検出部22と細線濃度変換部 23から構成される。 無線領域検出部21は、細線領域 であるか否かを判定し、その結果を細線過度変換部23 30 へ渡す。線幅検出部22は、線幅を検出する回路であ り、その検出結果を細線遺度変換部23へ渡す。細線濃 度変換部23は、細線領域検出部21の検出結果が細線 領域である場合は細線部の温度および線幅に応じて補正 量を決定し、補正した値を出力し、非細線領域の場合は 人力信号をそのまま出力する。

【0023】図4は、細線領域検出部の構成を示す。細 保領域検出部は着日画素を中心とする3×3近傍領域の Green信号を用いる。図3に示す3×3の画菜a. **b. c. d. e. f. g. vは着目画素 v を**小心とする それぞれに対応する位置のGrccn億号値を裹わして いる。細線領域検出部21は、3ラインのバッファ21 1と、パッファ中の3×3の画素について01,02, D3、D4方向のピーク画素検出回路212~215 と、各ピーク画素検出回路の出力を総合判定する回路2 16からなる。

【0024】細線領域の検出はまず、縦方向D1. 模方 向り2、斜め方向り3、り4、のそれぞれ4方向につい て、次の方法によって中央両者vがピーク画素であるか 否かを制定する。例として横方向D2の場合を説明す

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図3におけるvを中央とし左右には、eの値をとる3画 素において、条件(v-d>TH)&(v-c>TH) を満たすとき、着目画素vはりえ方向におけるピーク画 素であると判定する。 T11は例えば5程度の値をとる定 数である。

【0025】 縦方向 D1、 斜め方向 D3、 D4について もそれぞれ若目画素vを中央とする3画素について、同 様にvがピーク画素か否かを判定する。それらの判定結 果を基に、細線領域総合判定回路216ではD1.D 2. D3. D4の各4方向において、少なくとも1方向 10 【0033】 において中央面素vがピーク画素となる場合は細線領 域、それ以外の場合は非細線領域と判定し、判定結果を 出力する。

【0026】図5は、線幅検出部の構成を示す。線幅検 出部は、2値化処理部221と、7×7サイズのメモリ 222と、線幅カウント回路223からなる。線幅検出 部は岩目画素を中心とする7×7近傍領域のGrcen 信号を、所定の閾値で2値化処理221した結果をメモ リ222に格納する。2値化処理の結果、線部には "1"、非線部には"0"が格納される。

【0027】緑幅カウント回路223は、縦方向、横方 向のそれぞれについて"1"の個数をカウントし、両カ ウント数の最小値を線幅として出力する。例えば、7× 7近傍領域の2値化処理後、メモリ222には凶7に示 す結果が格納された場合、縦方向のカウント数は3、横 方向のカウント数は7となり、両者の最小値である値3 が線幅として、線幅カウント回路223から出力され

【0028】図6は、細線濃度変換部の構成を示す。細 線艦度整換部23は、最大値決定回路231と、変換量 30 く入るために風文字の画質は向上するが、絵柄領域では、 決定テーブル232と、濃度補正処理回路233と、セ レクタ234からなる。

【0029】最大値決定回路231は、R. G. B信号 の最大値MAX(R.G.B)を求める。変換量決定テ ープル232には、予め実験により読取誤差によって生 じる細線部の濃度低下量を、細線部のMAX(R, G, B)および線幅に対応付けて求め、その結果を基に作成 した変換テーブルが準備されている。変換量決定テープ ルの内容の例を図8に示す。

ープル232の出力値Subを基にR、G、B信号を次 の式により補正し出力する。補正前の信号値を(R) n、Gln、Bln)、補正後の信号値を(Rout. Coul. Boul)とすると、

 $R \circ u \iota = R \iota n + S u b$ 

Cout=Gln+Sub

Bour = Bin + Sub

[0031]セレクタ234は、細線領域検出部21の 検出結果が細線領域である場合、濃度補正処理回路23 50 が行われる。

6 3の出力値を選択し、非細線領域である場合、入力信号 (R. G. B) を選択し、出力する。

【0032】以上の処理によって、色紀を一定に保らな がら、読取訳差により生じる脚線部の濃度低下が補正さ れる。以降の処理では、カラー独写機に出力する場合 は、まず色補正部5においてRGB信号を補色のYMC 信号に変換する。この色補正方法には一般的には線形近 似いわゆるマスキング法などが提案されており、これら の方法を利用して例えば次のように色補正処理を行う。

 $Y = \alpha O + \alpha 1 \times R' + \alpha 2 \times G' + \alpha 3 \times B'$  $M = \beta O + \beta I \times R' + \beta 2 \times C' + \beta 3 \times B'$  $C = yO + yI \times R' + yZ \times G' + y3 \times B'$ ここで、α0~α3、β0~β3、γ0~γ3は画像人 引力装置の特性を考慮した色補正係数である。

【0034】次に、下色除去部6は、YMC信号からグ レー成分を取り除き、無成分に置き換えて黒信号Kを生 成する。なお、YMC成分は、生成した黑成分Kを差し 引いた値を用いる。下色除去処理前の信号を(Yin.

20 Min, Cin)、下色除去処理後の信号を(You t. Mout. Cout. Kout) とおくと、次の式 で表わされる。

[0035] Kout=min (Yin, Min, Ci n) × Ratio

Yout=Yin-Kout

Mour-Min-Kour

Cout = Cin-Kout

Ratioは下色除去量を表わしり、0~1、0の実数 値をとる。UCR量は1.0の場合、黒色の記録材が多 彩度の低下が目立ちやすいという傾向を持つ。 最後にプ リンタ特性を補正するためのプリンタ y 補正処理?を行 い、画像出力装置8に出力する。

[0036]

【発明の効果】以上、説明したように、請求項1記載の 発明によれば、原稿の反射光に含まれる冗長な成分を除 去しているので、画像の読み取り精度が向上する。

【0037】請求項2記載の発明によれば、細線領域の 渡度低下を補正しているので、特に低コントラスト文字 【0030】濃度補正処理回路233は、変換量決定テ 40 のような短線を含む原稿の濃度低下による画質劣化が改 苦される。

> 【0038】請求項3記載の発明によれば、進香中の画 業近傍の難、横、もしくは斜め方向の画素領域におい て、走査中の該面素の濃度が最大濃度となる面素を組織 領域として検出しているので、原稿中の細線領域が高精 度に検出される。

> 【0039】請求項4記載の発明によれば、細線領域と して検出された画素の濃度値に応じて濃度補正量を制御 しているので、読み取り誤差の度合に応じた濃度の補正

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[0040] 請求項5記載の発明によれば、細線の幅に 応じて濃度の補正量を制御しているので、読み取り誤差 の度合に応じた濃度の補正が行われる。

【0041】請求項6記載の発明によれば、色相を一定に保ちながら濃度のみを補正しているので、棚稼部の濃度を補正する際に、細線部の色味が変わらないため色のにじみによる画質劣化が生じない。

【0042】 請求項7記載の発明によれば、対数補正処理後の適度空間であるRGB信号または、CMY信号で表わされるカラー入力画像に対して、R. G. BまたはC. M. Yの各画素値から同一量を加減算することにより、細線部の複度を補正しているので、細線部の色味が変わらず、色のにじみによる画質劣化が生じない。

#### 【図面の簡単な説明】

【図1】 本発明のカラー画像処理装置の機能ブロック図を示す。

【図2】読取り誤差補正部の構成を示す。

【図3】ピーク画素の検出を説明する図である。

【図4】細線領域検出部の構成を示す。

- 【図5】線幅検出郎の構成を示す。
- 【図6】細線濃度変換部の構成を示す。
- 【図7】級幅検出部における2値化処理後の例を示す。
- 【図8】変換量決定テーブルの内容例を示す。
- 【図9】複写機の全体図である。
- 【図10】走査器の概要を示す。
- 【図11】原稿からの理想的な反射光を説明する図であ \*
- 【図12】原稿からの冗長な反射光を説明する図であ

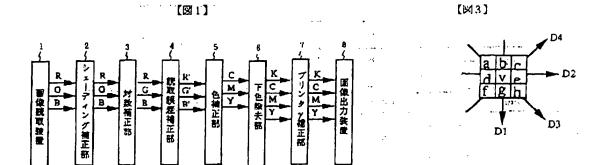
#### 10 Z.

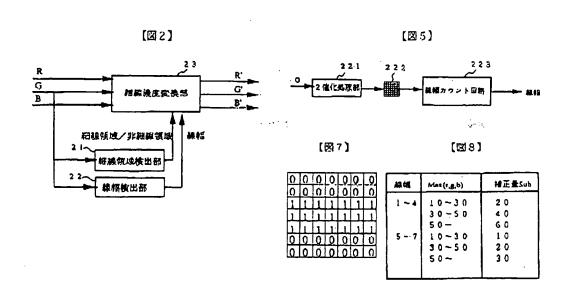
(5)

- 1 画像読み取り装置
- 2 シェーディング補正部
- 3 対数補正部

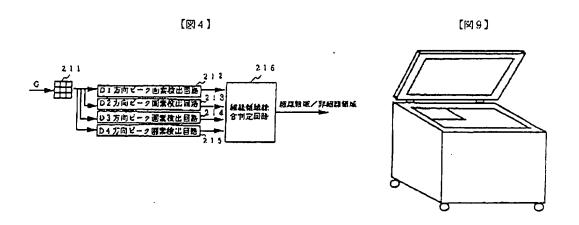
【符号の説明】

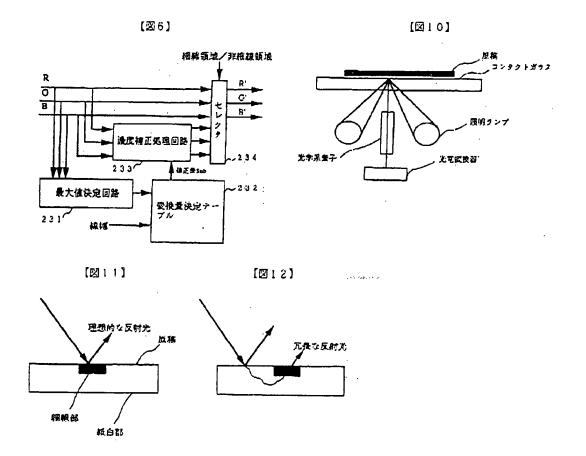
- 4 読み取り誤差補正部
- 5 色補正部
- 6 下色除去部
- 7 プリンタγ補正部
- 8 画像出力装置





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#### (54) [Title of the Invention] IMAGE PROCESSING APPARATUS

#### (57)[Abstract]

[Problem] Redundant components included in reflected light from the original are removed to improve reading accuracy of an image.

[Means for Solving the Problem] A color image processing apparatus is provided with a reading error correction portion 4. The reading error correction portion 4 detects a fine line area on a white background of the original to correct density reduction in the fine line area.

[Scope of Claims for Patent]

[Claim 1] An image processing apparatus comprising an image reading apparatus including a light source for irradiating an original with light in order to optically scan the original and read the same, an optical system for imaging reflected light from the original and a photoelectric converter on which the light is incident through the optical system to convert the incident light into electrical signals,

wherein the image processing apparatus comprises a portion for correcting a reading error that is caused by scattering of the light irradiated to the original.

[Claim 2] An image processing apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the error correction portion includes a portion for detecting a fine line area from an image signal, a portion for detecting a line width and a portion for correcting fine line

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density based on the fine line area and the line width.

[Claim 3] An image processing apparatus according to claim 2, wherein the fine line area detection portion detects, in a pixel area including a scanned pixel and its vicinities such as vertically adjacent pixels, horizontally adjacent pixels and obliquely adjacent pixels, a pixel in which the scanned pixel has the greatest density as the fine line area.

[Claim 4] An image processing apparatus according to claim 2, wherein the fine line density correction portion detects a density value of a pixel that is detected as the fine line area to control a density correction quantity depending on the detected density value.

[Claim 5] An image processing apparatus according to claim 2, wherein the fine line density correction portion controls a density correction quantity depending on the line width.

[Claim 6] An image processing apparatus according to claim 2, wherein the fine line density correction portion corrects only density with keeping hue constant when the image is a color input

[Claim 7] An image processing apparatus according to claim 2, wherein the fine line density correction portion corrects density by adding or subtracting a predetermined quantity to or from each pixel value of RGB or CMY when the image is a color input image of RGB signals that are a density space after a logarithm correction process or of CMY signals.

image.

(3)

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[Detailed Description of the Invention]

[Technical Field Pertinent to the Invention] The present invention relates to an image processing apparatus in which image reading accuracy of the original including characters and fine lines is improved.

[0002]

[Conventional Art] A description is given of an example of an image reading apparatus used in a conventional digital color copier. Fig. 9 is an overall view of a copier. The original to be read is placed in contact with a contact glass surface. A cover is closed to sandwich the original between the cover and the glass surface, then a reading operation is performed. [0003] The image reading apparatus is provided with a scanner that reciprocates along the lower surface of the contact glass surface to scan the original optically to read the same. Fig. 10 shows an outline of the scanner. The scanner includes an illumination lamp for illuminating the original, a photoelectric converter for receiving reflected light from the original and an optical system element such as a lens for directing the reflected light from the original to the photoelectric converter. [0004] The original is irradiated with light emitted from a light source and is scanned, the reflected light from the original enters the photoelectric converter via the optical system and the light is photoelectrically converted into electrical signals,

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so that the reading operation is performed. The photoelectric converter photoelectrically converts the reflected light from the original to output image information in the form of color signals of RGB lights. The photoelectric converter is configured primarily by, for example, a CCD line image sensor or the like.

[0005] Here, a description is given of a process in which a reading error occurs due to scattering of light irradiated around each pixel to be read. It can be considered that the reflected light from the original is ideally made up of reflected light by the surface of the original, as shown in Fig. 11. In practice, however, as shown in Fig. 12, redundant reflected light is present that is other than the reflected light at the surface of the original, invades the original and is emitted out of the original after scattering in unspecified directions.

[0006]

[Problems to be Solved by the Invention] For this reason, image information obtained by the image reading apparatus is a combination of the reflected light shown in Fig. 11 and the redundant reflected light shown in Fig. 12. When the original having a fine line on its white background is read, for example, a phenomenon occurs that reading density of the fine line is reduced due to a large influence of the redundant reflected light. The lower the density of the line drawing is, or the smaller the width of the line is, the degree of reduction of reading

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density is largely affected by light scattered around the line.

[0007] Such a reading error causes a problem that when the read

image is reproduced using a copier or the like, for example,

density of a character having low contrast such as penciling

is reduced, which deteriorates reproducibility.

[0008] As a process for improving reproducibility of characters. for example, an edge enhancement process or the like is applied to commonly-used copiers. Examples of prior art of the edge enhancement process include: An edge enhancement apparatus in which lightness information is extracted from color image signals expressed by density, a signal indicative of a degree of edge enhancement is generated from the lightness information and a result depending on the signal and a density level of image signals is outputted (see Japanese unexamined patent publication No. 61-273073); An apparatus in which color image signals of RGB are converted into L\*a\*b\* signals, sharpness correction (edge enhancement) is performed only on L\* and the L\*a\*b\* signals are subjected to inverse transformation into RGB signals or converted into CMY signals (see Japanese unexamined patent publication Nos. 3-102578 and 4-170267); An edge enhancement apparatus in which Laplacian is calculated from image data of at least one color of color image signals and the Laplacian is added to image signals (see Japanese unexamined patent publication No. 62-149264); and An edge enhancement apparatus in which a filter signal is calculated from image data of at least one color of

color image signals and image signals are corrected based on the filter signal(see Japanese unexamined patent publication No. 4-14383).

[0009] The edge enhancement processes mentioned above, however, are intended to improve dullness of edge portions in images and have little effect on image deterioration caused by density reduction described above. Accordingly, a problem still remains that characters blur.

[0010] It is an object of the present invention to provide an image processing apparatus in which image quality deterioration due to density reduction of low-contrast characters are improved. the density reduction being caused by scattering of light irradiated around each pixel to be read.

#### [0011]

[Means for Solving the Problems] In order to achieve the object mentioned above, according to the invention defined in claim 1, an image processing apparatus includes an image reading apparatus which includes a light source for irradiating an original with light in order to optically scan the original and read the same, an optical system for imaging reflected light from the original and a photoelectric converter on which the light is incident through the optical system to convert the incident light into electrical signals, wherein the image processing apparatus includes a portion for correcting a reading error that is caused by scattering of the light irradiated to

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the original.

[0012] According to the invention defined in claim 2, the error correction portion includes a portion for detecting a fine line area from an image signal, a portion for detecting a line width and a portion for correcting fine line density based on the fine line area and the line width.

[0013] According to the invention defined in claim 3, the fine line area detection portion detects, in a pixel area including a scanned pixel and its vicinities such as vertically adjacent pixels, horizontally adjacent pixels and obliquely adjacent pixels, pixels in which the scanned pixel has the greatest density as the fine line area.

[0014] According to the invention defined in claim 4, the fine line density correction portion detects a density value of a pixel that is detected as the fine line area to control a density correction quantity depending on the detected density value.

[0015] According to the invention defined in claim 5, the fine line density correction portion controls a density correction quantity depending on the line width.

[0016] According to the invention defined in claim 6, the fine line density correction portion corrects only density with keeping hue constant when the image is a color input image. [0017] According to the invention defined in claim 7, the fine line density correction portion corrects density by adding or subtracting a predetermined quantity to or from each pixel value

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of RGB or CMY when the image is a color input image of RGB signals that are a density space after a logarithm correction process or of CMY signals.

[0018]

[Embodiment of the Invention] Hereinafter, one embodiment of the present invention will be specifically described with reference to drawings. A color copier is taken as an example and an image processing apparatus according to the embodiment of the present invention is described. Fig. 1 is a functional block diagram of a color image processing apparatus according to the present invention. An image reading apparatus 1 includes a scanner that reciprocates along a lower surface of a contact glass surface to scan the original optically to read the same. The scanner scans the original that is irradiated with light from a light source, performs photoelectric conversion of the reflected light and outputs image information. The photoelectric conversion of a color image is made by, for example, performing color separation by a filter for separating the reflected light from the original into three colors of R, G and B, using a light receiving element such as a CCD to acquire an analog signal proportional to light amount thereof and using an AD converter to acquire image information of RGB digital signals.

[0019] Generally, the light receiving element has variations for each pixel and amount of light for irradiating the original

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from the light source differs between the vicinity of the center and end portions. Accordingly, the image signals that are obtained by the photoelectric conversion are subjected to a shading correction process in a shading correction portion 2 so as to equalize variations caused by sensor output.

[0020] The density of the original is in logarithm relationship to the amount of the reflected light from the original. A logarithm correction portion 3 performs a logarithm correction process, so that the image signals after the shading correction process are converted into signals proportional to the density of the original. Here, suppose that a signal value is within the range of 0-255, and 0 and 255 correspond to white and black, respectively.

[0021] Next, a detailed description is given of a process in a reading error correction portion 4 that is a feature of the present invention. Attention is focused on the truth in which a reading error mainly occurs in a fine line area on a white background. In this example, a fine line area on a white background of the original is detected and density reduction in the detected fine line area portion is corrected to an appropriate value.

[0022] Fig. 2 shows a configuration of the reading error correction portion which includes a fine line area detection portion 21, a line width detection portion 22 and a fine line density conversion portion 23. The fine line area detection

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portion 21 determines whether or not an area is a fine line area to deliver the determination result to the fine line density conversion portion 23. The line width detection portion 22 is a circuit for detecting a line width and delivers the detection result to the fine line density conversion portion 23. When the detection result received from the fine line area detection portion 21 is a fine line area, the fine line density conversion portion 23 determines a correction quantity depending on density and a line with of a fine line portion to output the corrected value. When the detection result is a non-fine line area, the fine line density conversion portion 23 outputs the input signal without change.

[0023] Fig. 4 shows a configuration of the fine line area detection portion. The fine line area detection portion uses Green signals in the vicinity of a 3 X 3 area whose center is a target pixel. Pixels a, b, c, d, e, f, g and v included in a 3 x 3 area whose center is a target pixel v shown in Fig. 3 denote Green signal values at respective corresponding positions. The fine line area detection portion 21 includes a three-line buffer 211, peak pixel detection circuits 212-215 in the directions of D1, D2, D3 and D4 concerning 3 x 3 pixels in the buffer and a circuit 216 for determining output of each of the peak pixel detection circuits in a comprehensive manner.

[0024] In order to detect a fine line area, first, with respect to each of the four directions of the vertical direction D1,

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the horizontal direction D2 and the oblique directions D3 and D4, the following method is used to determine whether or not the central pixel v is a peak pixel. A case of the horizontal direction D2 is described, for example. The D2 direction peak pixel detection circuit 213 shown in Fig. 4 determines that the target pixel v is a peak pixel in the D2 direction when a condition (v-d>TH)&(v-c>TH) is satisfied in the three pixels including values of v, d and e in which v is the center and d and e are horizontally adjacent thereto in Fig. 3. This a constant having a value of, for example, approximately 5.

[0025] Concerning three pixels whose center is the target pixel vin each of the vertical direction D1 and the oblique directions D3 and D4, it is determined whether or not the target pixel vis a peak pixel in a similar way. Based on the determination results, the fine line area comprehensive determination circuit 216 determines that an area is a fine line area when the central pixel vis a peak pixel in at least one direction of the four directions D1, D2, D3 and D4. Otherwise, the fine line area comprehensive determination circuit 216 determines that an area is a non-fine line area. After the determination, the fine line area comprehensive determination circuit 216 outputs the determination result.

[0026] Fig. 5 shows a configuration of the line width detection portion. The line width detection portion includes a binary process portion 221, a memory 222 having a size of  $7 \times 7$  and

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a line width counting circuit 223. The line width detection portion stores in the memory 222 a result obtained by performing a binary process on Green signals in the vicinity of a 7 X 7 area whose center is a target pixel using a predetermined threshold value. As a result of the binary process, a value of "1" is stored as a line portion, while a value of "0" is stored as a non-line portion.

[0027] The line width counting circuit 223 counts the number of values of "1" in each of the vertical and horizontal directions to output the minimum value of both the counts as a line width. For example, after performing the binary process on the vicinity of the 7 X 7 area, when a result shown in Fig. 7 is stored in the memory 222, the count is 3 in the vertical direction and the count is 7 in the horizontal direction. Then, the minimum value of both the counts, i.e., 3 is outputted as a line width from the line width counting circuit 223.

[0028] Fig. 6 shows a configuration of the fine line density conversion portion. The fine line density conversion portion 23 includes a maximum value determination circuit 231, a conversion quantity determination table 232, a density correction processing circuit 233 and a selector 234.

[0029] The maximum value determination circuit 231 finds the maximum value MAX(R, G, B) of R, G and B signals. An experiment is carried out in advance and a quantity of density reduction in a fine line portion that is caused by a reading error is

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determined in connection with the MAX(R, G, B) and a line width of the fine line portion. In the conversion quantity determination table 232 is prepared a conversion table that is created based on the experimental result. An example of contents of the conversion quantity determination table is shown in Fig. 8.

[0030] The density correction processing circuit 233 corrects R, G and B signals based on an output value Sub of the conversion quantity determination table 232 using equations as shown below and outputs the corrected signal values. Supposing that signal values before the correction are denoted by  $(R_{in}, G_{in}, B_{in})$  and signal values after the correction are denoted by  $(R_{out}, G_{out}, B_{out})$ , the following equations are obtained.

 $R_{out} = R_{in} + Sub$ 

Gout = Gin + Sub

 $B_{out} = B_{in} + Sub$ 

[0031] The selector 234 selects output values of the density correction processing circuit 233 to output the same when the detection result by the fine line area detection portion 21 is a fine line area. When the result is a non-fine line area, the selector 234 selects input signals (R, G, B) to output the same. [0032] The processes mentioned above allow for correction of density reduction in a fine line portion with hue being kept constant, the density reduction being caused by a reading error. In the following processes, in the case of output to a color

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copier, a color correction portion 5 converts RGB signals into YMC signals that are complementary colors. As this color correction method, a linear approximation method, a so-called masking method and others are proposed generally. These methods are used to perform a color correction process as follows, for example.

[0033]

 $Y = \alpha 0 + \alpha 1 \times R' + \alpha 2 \times G' + \alpha 3 \times B'$ 

 $M = \beta 0 + \beta 1 \times R' + \beta 2 \times G' + \beta 3 \times B'$ 

 $C = \gamma 0 + \gamma 1 \times R' + \gamma 2 \times G' + \gamma 3 \times B'$ 

Here,  $\alpha 0$ -  $\alpha 3$ ,  $\beta 0$ -  $\beta 3$  and  $\gamma 0$ - $\gamma 3$  are color correction coefficients in which features of an image input and output apparatus are considered.

[0034] Next, an undercolor removal portion 6 rids YMC signals of a gray component to replace the gray component with a black component, so that a black signal K is generated. Note that a value obtained by subtracting the generated black component K is used as the YMC components. Supposing that signals before the undercolor removal process are denoted by  $(Y_{in}, M_{in}, C_{in})$  and signals after the undercolor removal process are denoted by  $(Y_{out}, M_{in}, C_{in})$ 

 $M_{out}$ ,  $C_{out}$ ,  $K_{out}$ ), the following equations are expressed.

[0035]  $K_{out} = min (Y_{in}, M_{in}, C_{in}) \times Ratio$ 

Yout = Yin - Kout

Mout = Min - Kout

Cout = Cin - Kout

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The "Ratio" denotes an undercolor removal quantity and has a real number of 0.0-1.0. When the UCR quantity has a value of 1.0, an image quality of black characters is improved due to many black-color recording materials. In this case, however, reduction of color saturation is liable to stand out in a picture area. Lastly, a printer  $\gamma$  correction process 7 is performed for correcting printer characteristics and an output process to an image output apparatus 8 is performed.

[0036]

[Effect of the Invention] As discussed above, according to the invention defined in claim 1, reading accuracy of images is improved since redundant components included in reflected light from the original are removed.

[0037] According to the invention defined in claim 2, deterioration of an image quality, which is caused by density reduction of the original including fine lines particularly such as low-contrast characters, is improved since the density reduction is corrected in a fine line area.

[0038] According to the invention defined in claim 3, in a pixel area including a scanned pixel and its vicinities such as the vertically adjacent pixels, the horizontally adjacent pixels and the obliquely adjacent pixels, pixels in which the scanned pixel has the greatest density is detected as a fine line area. Accordingly, a fine line area in the original is detected with a high degree of precision.

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[0039] According to the invention defined in claim 4, density is corrected in accordance with a degree of a reading error, since a density correction quantity is controlled depending on a density value of a pixel that is detected as a fine line area.

[0040] According to the invention defined in claim 5, density is corrected in accordance with a degree of a reading error, since a density correction quantity is controlled depending on a width of a fine line.

[0041] According to the invention defined in claim 6, only density is corrected with keeping hue constant. Accordingly, when density of a fine line portion is corrected, a color of the fine line portion does not change, which causing no deterioration of an image quality due to blur of colors.

[0042] According to the invention defined in claim 7, density of a fine line portion is corrected for a color input image that is expressed by RGB signals that are a density space after a logarithm correction process or by CMY signals by adding or subtracting the same quantity to or from each pixel value of RGB or CMY. Accordingly, a color of the fine line portion does not change and no deterioration of an image quality occurs due to blur of colors.

[Brief Description of the Drawings]

[Fig. 1] A functional block diagram of a color image processing apparatus of the present invention.

[Fig. 2] A configuration of a reading error correction portion.

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- [Fig. 3] A diagram for describing detection of a peak pixel.
- [Fig. 4] A configuration of a fine line area detection portion.
- [Fig. 5] A configuration of a line width detection portion.
- [Fig. 6] A configuration of a fine line density conversion portion.
- [Fig. 7] An example after a binary process in the line width detection portion.
- [Fig. 8] An example of contents of a conversion quantity determination table.
- [Fig. 9] An overall view of a copier.
- [Fig. 10] An outline of a scanner.
- [Fig. 11] A diagram for describing ideal reflected light from the original.
- [Fig. 12] A diagram for describing redundant reflected light from the original.

#### [Explanation of Reference Symbols]

- 1 ... image reading apparatus
- 2 ... shading correction portion
- 3 ... logarithm correction portion
- 4 ... reading error correction portion
- 5 ... color correction portion
- 6 ... undercolor removal portion
- 7 ... printer y correction portion
- 8 ... image output apparatus

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Fig. 5

221 Binary process portion

223 Line width counting circuit

Line width

Fig. 6

231 Maximum value determination circuit

232 Conversion quantity determination table

233 Density correction processing circuit

234 Selector

Fine line area/Non-fine line area

Correction quantity Sub

Line width

Fig. 8

Line width

Correction quantity Sub

Fig. 10

Original

Contact glass

Illumination lamp

Optical system element

Photoelectric converter

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#### Fig. 1

- 1 Image reading apparatus
- 2 Shading correction portion
- 3 Logarithm correction portion
- 4 Reading error correction portion
- 5 Color correction portion
- 6 Undercolor removal portion
- 7 Printer  $\gamma$  correction portion
- 8 Image output apparatus

#### Fig. 2

- 23 Fine line density conversion portion
- 21 Fine line area detection portion
- 22 Line width detection portion

Fine line area/Non-fine line area

Line width

#### Fig. 4

- 212 D1 direction peak pixel detection circuit
- 213 D2 direction peak pixel detection circuit
- 214 D3 direction peak pixel detection circuit
- 215 D4 direction peak pixel detection circuit
- 216 Fine line area comprehensive determination circuit

Fine line area/Non-fine line area

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Fig. 11

Ideal reflected light

Original

Fine line portion

Paper white portion

Fig. 12

Redundant reflected light

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